



1

SENATE RESOLUTION

2

WHEREAS, The members of the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with regret of the death of Truman K. Gibson Jr. on Friday, December 23, 2005; and

3

4

5

WHEREAS, Mr. Gibson was a Chicago attorney who had been the last surviving member of the World War II-era "black Cabinet" of Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman; he was an advocate for African-American soldiers in the War Department from 1940 through 1945 and fought tirelessly to break down the segregation that ruled the U.S. Army, to persuade the military leadership to commit black servicemen to combat instead of relegating them to service and support duty, and to protect the rights and even the lives of African-American soldiers trained at camps mostly in the Jim Crow South where white violence was a constant threat; and

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

WHEREAS, This story was the heart of Mr. Gibson's memoir, "Knocking Down Barriers: My Fight for Black America", published this year by Northwestern University Press; and

17

18

19

WHEREAS, Born in Atlanta on January 22, 1912, Mr. Gibson moved with his family to Chicago in 1929; as a young graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, he was a member of the legal team that challenged a restrictive racial covenant prohibiting African Americans from living in the Washington Park area of the South Side of Chicago; he spent months pouring over property deeds to build the factual basis for the U.S. Supreme Court case that overturned the covenant; and

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

WHEREAS, In 1940, Mr. Gibson served as executive director of the American Negro Exposition, which was in effect an African-American world's fair to commemorate the 75th anniversary of emancipation, showcase black excellence in the arts and entertainment, and celebrate African-American

28

29

30

31

1 contributions to U.S. history, featuring Duke Ellington, Paul
2 Robeson, Lionel Hampton, Count Basie, and other famous
3 entertainers of the day; and

4 WHEREAS, With the outbreak of war in Europe and the
5 increasing likelihood that the United States would be drawn in,
6 the Roosevelt administration created the office of civilian
7 aide to the secretary of war as an advocate for African
8 Americans; Mr. Gibson served as an assistant to the first
9 civilian aide, William Hastie, and in 1943 was promoted to the
10 job; he played an influential role in finally convincing the
11 U.S. Army that it had to commit African-American troops to
12 battle; and

13 WHEREAS, Mr. Gibson was an adviser to filmmaker Frank Capra
14 of "It's a Wonderful Life" fame in making the movie short "The
15 Negro Soldier" to demonstrate to the civilian population the
16 African-American contribution to the war; he got Joe Louis, the
17 world heavyweight boxing champion, to form a group of boxing
18 champs to put on matches at U.S. Army bases here and aboard;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Mr. Gibson was appointed to the Advisory
21 Commission on Universal Military Training by President Harry S.
22 Truman; he had met boxing champ Joe Louis and become his lawyer
23 in the 1930s; during the war, Mr. Louis often reported to Mr.
24 Gibson about racial conditions on Army posts, and after the
25 war, his association with Louis propelled Mr. Gibson into a
26 career as one of the nation's premier boxing promoters; and

27 WHEREAS, With Chicagoans James Norris and Arthur Wirtz, he
28 ran the International Boxing Club, which ruled the sport until
29 declared a monopoly by the courts in 1959; he pioneered network
30 television broadcasting of the sport; and

31 WHEREAS, After leaving boxing, Mr. Gibson returned to law

1 practice in Chicago; he practiced law until his health failed
2 in November of 2005; and

3 WHEREAS, The passing of Truman K. Gibson Jr. has been
4 deeply felt by many, especially his daughter, Karen Kelley; his
5 two grandchildren; his three great-grandchildren; and his
6 great-great-grandchild; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL
8 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
9 Truman K. Gibson, who championed the rights of African-American
10 military members, and we extend our sincere condolences to his
11 family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it
12 further

13 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
14 presented to his family as an expression of our deepest
15 sympathy.